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contempt. The tail of a whale is no wise more complicated structurally, nor a whit more interesting morphologically, than the sting of a bee; but it occupies an infinitely greater space, and is more obvious both to the gaze of the curious and the study of the competent,—a fact which the management of a popular museum cannot afford to ignore.

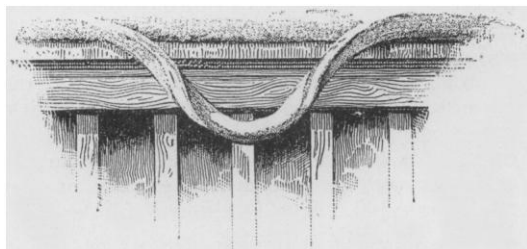
The national museum has very properly developed most in those departments, like ichthyology, geology, and ethnology, which receive, independently, governmental aid, and thus furnish both workers and material. If some of the other departments have so far been left without material support, those persons feel least like complaining who are familiar with the ultimate intentions of the director and his efficient assistant, and with the vast amount of work accomplished in organization and installation since the building was completed. C. V. RILEY,

*Hon. curator of insects, U.S.N.M.*

Washington, D.C., Feb. 12.

#### Plastic snow.

A phenomenon new to me was observed at the close of the north-east storm this noon, which showed the cohesive force in wet snow. The railing to my porch has a top sloping about ten degrees each way. My attention was directed to a festoon of snow sixteen inches and a half between ends, and seven inches deep, formed from a snow-ribbon. As it left the railing, it was gradually twisted, so that the bottom of the loop was in a position the exact reverse of what it had held when upon the rail. The twist-



ing-force had extended for a number of inches in each direction in the part that remained upon the rail. This loop hung free, and moved over an arc of five or six degrees when the wind struck it. It was of short duration, as the water from the rail melted the centre; and the ends, as they swung back, were broken off about four inches from the rail, and showed a spiral twist like that in a twist-drill. On the next panel was the end of a former loop; and this hung free, and measured nearly ten inches in length.

EDWARD H. WILLIAMS, Jun.

Bethlehem, Penn., Feb. 16.

#### Hereditary malformation.

Mr. E. Brabrook writes to the society of anthropology in Paris an account of hereditary hypospadias, first reported to the *Lancet* by Dr. Lingard. The order of inheritance is as follows: first generation, one affected; second, one; third, one, whose widow afterwards married a man unaffected. This woman had seven sons—three by her first husband, and four by her second husband—all affected. I will divide these seven sons into the first and second set. Of the first three, one died childless: the other two had six sons, all affected. Of the second set were born eleven sons,—four affected, and seven unaffected.

Three sons are reported of the first set in the next or sixth generation, two of whom are affected; while, of three sons belonging to the second set in the same generation, none are affected. Aside from the great value of such a compact series of well-authenticated facts, a very interesting question, often mooted among stock-breeders, of the permanence in the effects of first impregnations, receives here a partial answer. The running-out of this influence in a few generations should also be carefully studied. I do not speak of the transmission of hereditary traits of the male through the mother, because Dr. Lingard does not seem to have looked among the female descendants for co-ordinated malformations. OTIS T. MASON.

#### The Georgia wonder-girl and her lessons.

I read with no little interest the article with this title which appeared in this journal on Feb. 6.

I was privileged to make a private examination of Miss Lulu Hurst, the person referred to in the article, on several occasions, in the presence of her parents, and usually of her business-manager. On one occasion I was permitted to make a careful examination of the subject's physical development, and take notes upon her normal temperature, heart-beat, and respiration. I found her to be a healthy, intelligent country-girl, *plump* rather than muscular, presenting nothing very unusual in her constitution; and I certainly did not note the fact that I might be shaking hands with a 'giant.' The muscles of her arm and fore-arm were *not* unusually developed; nor did they stand out prominently, as they do in muscular subjects of either sex. She is above the average stature for women, but does not strike one as being either exceedingly active in movement or overpowerful in frame; as to the former, rather the reverse, I think.

Of the experiment with the staff, I shall simply state that in my case, on two occasions, the staff gyrated rapidly about its long axis, obliging me to quit my hold. This was observed by other persons present during the experiment. In the test with the hat, Miss Lulu stands before you with her hands extended horizontally, palms up, with the little fingers and sides touching each other. On the surface thus presented we place our hat, with the outer aspect of the crown resting on the two palms. The experimenter is then invited to lift the hat off. When I tried this experiment, the hat was only removed after considerable force was exerted, and then came away with a crackling noise, as if charged with electricity. That Professor Newcomb's explanation would not account for the result here, I would say that I knelt in such a position that my eyes were but a short distance away; and my line of vision was in the same plane with the opposed palmar surfaces and the crown of the hat. This latter was of very light Manila straw, with the outer periphery of the crown rounded. Now, as the form of this surface was a broad ellipse, with a major axis of perhaps seven inches, and a minor axis of six, quite smooth, it would be simply an impossible feat for Miss Lulu to seize it when the distance between the inner margins of the opposite thenar eminences in a right line is less than six inches.

Permit me now to present a test which Professor Newcomb did not witness. It consisted in standing upright, with one foot in advance of the other to act as a brace, and holding in the hands with a firm grasp an ordinary chair. This is to be done by seizing it at the rear uprights, about where the back joins the bottom; the former being towards you, and parallel with your anterior chest-wall, against which you